

## BACKGROUND

Diabetes is a chronic disease in which the body can't produce or properly use insulin, the hormone needed by the body to change food sugar into energy. Of the estimated 16 million Americans with the condition, more than 90 percent have Type 2, or non-insulin-dependent, diabetes. Most at risk are minorities and the elderly. Causes may involve both genetic and lifestyle factors.

## WHAT VA IS DOING

Primary areas of VA research on diabetes include testing new drug therapies, probing the genetic causes of diabetes, and learning new ways to help patients control blood sugar and reduce risk factors.

Highlights of current or recent research include the following:

- **VA tops managed care for diabetes care**—Diabetic patients enrolled in VA's health system had better control of their blood sugar than diabetics with managed-care plans, and were more likely to receive recommended preventive care such as annual eye and foot exams, according to a study in which researchers analyzed the medical records of more than 8,000 patients.

- **Halting brain damage after diabetic coma**—Researchers at the San Francisco VA Medical Center showed in animal studies that pyruvate—a natural, nontoxic byproduct of glucose metabolism—may prevent brain-cell death and cognitive loss in diabetics following an episode of severely low blood sugar.

- **Treating diabetic foot infections**—A VA-led clinical trial involving 371 patients in eight countries found that linezolid, a new antibiotic, is an effective treatment for diabetic foot infections. The new drug may be an important agent for doctors in light of the growing problem of bacterial resistance to older antibiotics.

For more information on VA research:

Web: [www.va.gov/resdev](http://www.va.gov/resdev)

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